

JANE CUNNINGHAM

APRIL 1, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. THOMAS, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 5068.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 5068) granting a pension to Jane Cunningham, report as follows:

James Cunningham, husband of the claimant, enlisted January 25, 1864, and was discharged July 3, 1865, after serving over a year and a half. He was wounded in the thigh at the battle of the Wilderness. He was pensioned for that wound, but for disease of eyes contracted in service he had difficulty in furnishing evidence to satisfy the Pension Office. He became almost totally blind, was unable to do anything for the support of his family, felt himself a burden, his claim for disease of eyes was not acted upon, he became despondent, brooded upon his poverty and helplessness, and, finally, as is believed, in an attack of at least temporary insanity, caused by his poverty and distress, resulting from the disease of eyes contracted in service and in line of duty, he committed suicide.

The widow's claim under the general law was rejected by the Pension Office, and the rejection affirmed by the Secretary of the Interior, on the ground that the evidence did not satisfactorily show that the soldier's death was due to causes arising in the service. The certificate of examination made in June, 1886, shows that at that time he was totally blind in one eye and could not distinguish any of "Mellen's test types" with the other. When the claim was finally allowed, a short time after the soldier's death, his rate was fixed at \$30 per month.

Your committee are of opinion that the soldier was so despondent on account of his condition and so discouraged because his claim was not allowed that he became mentally unbalanced, temporarily at least, and that while so mentally unbalanced, and in consequence thereof took his own life, and the passage the bill is therefore recommended with an amendment, striking out the word "instructed" in lines 3 and 4, and inserting in lieu thereof the words, "authorized and directed."